The psychological effects of being unfriended online

As much as our online relationships enrich our lives, they can also cause emotional pain when we're unceremoniously "unfriended". If you've felt upset or insulted when someone has unfriended you on a social media site, you're not



alone. A recent study found that the most common responses to being unfriended were:

1. I was surprised
2. It bothered me
3. I was amused
4. I felt sad

Overcoming being unfriended

Regardless if it's online or in the real world, rejection hurts. In real life you usually know why a relationship has ended but on social media the reasons are sometimes difficult to understand.

Being unfriended is usually just bewildering if the individual is an online friend only, but if that person is a real life friend or acquaintance or, worse still, a family member, you can be left feeling extremely hurt and angry.

How can you overcome the experience?

- **Ask yourself if the person who unfriended you is really a friend.** Are you more upset about being unfriended than about losing this person from your life? If the thought of spending time with certain friends increasingly feels like an obligation, it could be time to end that friendship.

- **Don't take things too personally.** You can't force people to like you. The fact is you may have been unfriended by someone with 1,000 online friends who simply feels things are out of control and wants to scale back. Keep in mind that if one person has unfriended you, someone else might soon be sending you a friend request.

- **Examine your online behaviour.** Is your online behaviour behind the unfriending? If so, you may want to change your ways to avoid more unfriendings. One study found the number one reason for unfriending someone has to do with the types of things people post. Do you post dozens of updates about your life? This might include what you're eating for breakfast to what the weather is like today. Your mom may be amused, but others may simply find this annoying.

Why was I unfriended?

- **Do you post controversial comments about religion or politics?** Remember that not everyone will share your views and may find your opinions offensive.

- **Do you constantly brag about your life?** Posting news is one thing but endless boasting can alienate people – as do endless postings of "selfies." Constant updates on your child's exploits will be loved by close friends and family but, again, can be irritating to others.

- **Do you post offensive material?** Off-colour cartoons or gory news footage can be extremely disturbing to many people.

- **Do you play Facebook games and publicly broadcast your scores?** Those who don't play these games find it annoying to have their home page cluttered with how your virtual crops are growing or that you've expanded your kingdom. They also may not appreciate receiving endless invitations to join you on your gaming adventures.

Social media is a great way to keep in touch with family and friends at home and abroad, and can provide hours of entertainment. It’s also a good vehicle to connect with people around the world who share our hobbies and interests. Social media should be used in balance and in a reasonable manner; remember not to take online relationships too seriously, and keep other people’s posts in perspective.